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SUBJECT: LITHUANIAN PRESIDENT: EU INCOMPLETE WITHOUT TURKEY

REF: VILNIUS 522

¶1. (SBU) President Adamkus argued for the eventual accession of Turkey to the European Union in a June 17 interview with Turkish newspaper Miliyet, according to the Lithuanian press.

Adamkus plans to make an official visit to Turkey later this week, where he will meet President Sezer, PM Erdogan, and Turkish chief negotiator for EU accession, Ali Babacan. On June 16, in the Council of Europe summit, Adamkus argued more generally for an "open doors" policy in EU accession.

¶2. (SBU) Tomas Gulbinas, head of the MFA's Common Foreign Policy Division, told us June 6 that Adamkus had been planning this statement for a while (reftel) and that Lithuania had coordinated in advance with its Baltic neighbors and Poland to arrive at a common position that "no artificial obstacles should be created for countries striving for accession." Adamkus's foreign policy advisor Simonas Satunas told CDA June 19 that the statement was intended to smooth the way for the President's upcoming visit, hastening to add that the GOL did not want any special favors for Turkey during the accession process, either. He noted that Turkey's recent performance in the meeting its commitments to the EU "disappointing."

¶3. (SBU) Turkish CDA Kemal Kaygisiz told us June 19 that Adamkus's statement was "positive," but added that Ankara would like the GOL to speak up more forcefully in EU meetings like the June 16 Council summit on Turkey's behalf. He said that Adamkus would hear this message from his hosts later this week.

¶4. (SBU) The principle of "open doors" for all countries meeting the EU's membership criteria is the cornerstone of Lithuania's neighborhood policy. Lithuania sees itself as a leading advocate within the EU for expansion. Although Lithuania's primary focus for enlargement is Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, the Lithuanian government supports the accession of Turkey to the EU as a natural consequence of the "open doors" principle. Lithuanian society does not necessarily share the political class's enthusiasm for this policy; an April 27 opinion poll found that barely a third of all Lithuanians think that the EU should expand to include all Central and Eastern Europe, Turkey and the Caucasus in the coming decade. (Note: Turkey currently has 80 air force servicemen and four F-16 fighters deployed to Lithuania as part of NATO's air-policing operation. These forces will remain here until July 2006.)

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